



European governments need to build a national consensus around more defence spending

As European governments look to spend more on defence to better deter security threats from Russia and others, a lack of public support for the spending trade-offs involved risks triggering a political backlash. A new CER policy brief, '[How to build public support for defence spending in Europe: Strategies for preventing a political backlash](#)', by Armida van Rij, presents ways for governments to gain public support in a political landscape marked by the re-emergence of far-right parties.

The policy brief sets out a communication strategy for gaining the public's support for the spending trade-offs required to invest more in defence, and outlines the key messages governments should be focusing on. It presents ways for governments to actively engage in a national consensus building exercise by using unconventional approaches to reach audiences beyond the national security establishment. These include hosting high-level public theatre discussions to consider the security threats, and funding for the arts to contribute to the public conversation on defence. The paper also sets out the policy options to finance higher levels of defence spending by using a combination of higher taxes, spending cuts, and increased government deficits in those countries that can afford them.

Armida van Rij, the author, said: *"The deteriorating security landscape in Europe necessitates higher levels of defence spending to deter and defend Europe. Many European governments shy away from publicly making the case for this because it involves making unpopular spending choices. Yet building a national consensus in favour of rearmament policies is essential if they want to avoid a political backlash at their next elections."*

Notes for editors:

To discuss the policy brief or request an interview with Armida van Rij [@armida.bsky.social](#) please contact Kate Mullineux in the CER press office on pressoffice@cer.eu or +44 (0) 20 7233 1199.

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